

Kevin Minor: 0:01

Greetings and welcome to the NASPO Pulse. It's the podcast where we're monitoring issues in state procurement. I'm your host, Kevin Miner, and today we continue our internship mini-series with management. Leah just finished an internship as a student supplier relationship analyst and we're going to ask her what it was like to work for the state of Michigan, how she felt about her contributions during working for the state and what impact her internship had on procurement. We're going to ask her if she encountered any challenges during her internship and how she overcame them, and much, much more.

Kevin Minor: 0:51

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Liah Kilgore: 2:04

So my name is Leah Kilgore. I am an incoming junior at Michigan State University. I am from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and I'm a supply chain management major with a minor in environmental and sustainability studies. This is actually my first day of school of my junior year, so I'm super excited, and I just finished an internship as a student supply relationship analyst for the state of Michigan over the summer.

Shaquasia Barksdale: 2:30

Thank you so much, Leah, for that great intro about yourself. So what was it like to work for the state of Michigan?

Liah Kilgore: 2:39

I had an incredible experience working for the state of Michigan. I actually got to live in my college town of East Lansing over the summer and I got to commute into office twice a week and spend some high quality face-to-face time getting to know my coworkers. I always felt really included from the get-go and as a part of my team. They really valued my opinion and what I had to offer, which was something that I didn't really anticipate. I thought I was going to be like a lowly intern, but that really wasn't the case at all. I was a fourth member of the supplier relationship management team and I was always treated as such and included in everything that was going on in the workplace. So I'm just extremely grateful for my team and everything that they've given me.

Shaquasia Barksdale: 3:28

Okay, Leah, so can you? You mentioned that you were included, so can you name some instances where you were included within the workplace when you were there?

Liah Kilgore: 3:41

Yeah, so my team specialized in issue resolution. So when there were issues with the contracts, that's when our team would step in, like via protests, and I was always included in those conversations about how to address the issues and any steps that I wanted to take going forward that weren't in the typical process. If there was something I wanted to add or contribute and I really felt valued that way and also just being included in every conversation going on, I was really clued in to things that were going on in the office that didn't really pertain to me, but just they really wanted to give me a broader scope of procurement as a whole, which really helped my knowledge.

Shaquasia Barksdale: 4:29

So would you be able to describe, like some of the the, I would say, the lead roles that you had within that, within the department they placed you in?

Liah Kilgore: 4:40

Yeah.

Liah Kilgore: 4:40

So some of the tasks that I was assigned to do on my own, one of the main ones was setting up annual supplier business review meetings, which are basically annual meetings where we meet with our suppliers and just talk about any issues they're having, any successes, just to get a review of what's going on and really check in.

Liah Kilgore: 5:04

It kind of heightens our supplier relationship with them and they've been getting really good reviews.

Liah Kilgore: 5:12

So my job was to schedule those meetings, to set them up and to sit in them and I really got to learn a lot about the contracts that the state held from being a part of those meetings and and just learning about what they had to say and how the contracts actually went about in real life and the reality of them. They really gave me a good glimpse of not only specifically to our department. They kind of let me float about the office and get a glimpse of sourcing too, because I was on the supplier relationship side of things. Because I was on the supplier relationship side of things. So as much as I got to do those things issue resolution and just kind of managing those relationships they also let me float around to the sourcing side and see what the buyers were up to, and I really appreciated that, because at first I had no clue. I was working on the complete other end of things, but by the end of it I was observing the buyers and seeing really how the sourcing process happened also, so I really valued that.

Kevin Minor: 6:19

Lita. Was there anything that surprised you about that process? What's something specifically that you learned?

Liah Kilgore: 6:28

Something specifically that I learned. I something specifically that I learned was, um, how contracts were created. I was actually tasked with doing contract change notices and I had no idea that there were so many, so many rules that we had to follow to get those out and what a tedious process it was and how many people were a part of it. That was something that was really crazy. I got to approve contracts that were millions of dollars and that was a lot of weight. I was kind of stressed about it, but I was really walked through the process and, yeah, I just had no idea that there were so many things involved with procurement, particularly the contract monitoring, contract change notices.

Liah Kilgore: 7:14

There's a lot that goes on with contracts that I was really educated about and that it's not as scary as I thought it was. I mean, two lawyers were on my team and they had me review contracts with them and once you really break it down, it's not as scary. I'm not as scary looking at contracts even in my own life as I used to be. The frying print really isn't isn't a foreign language. I can read it if I really try. So that was really valuable and surprising to me.

Kevin Minor: 7:46

Sure Well, just being able to understand them right, I mean, it's, it's a lot less scary when you know what you're looking at. Yeah, exactly, I mean, it's a lot less scary when you know what you're looking at.

Liah Kilgore: 7:51

Yeah, exactly, it's a lot less scary.

Shaquasia Barksdale: 7:56

Okay, so when it comes to that, so how do you feel your contributions have impacted your overall internship with Michigan?

Liah Kilgore: 8:08

Well, I'm fortunate enough that I'm actually continuing my relationship with the state of Michigan. I have been hired on as a student buyer assistant actually, so my work is going to be continued into this year, so I'm so excited, which makes me feel like I have made a contribution to the office.

Liah Kilgore: 8:28

So, yeah, I really get to continue those annual supplier business. Yeah, that's great change notices and I'm currently working on an initiative project for, actually, the governor's initiative project. We're doing a big marketing project because she's trying to get globally disadvantaged zones involved in and more kind of high up on the list to be bidders for the state. So I'm working on a big advertising project for that right now. Yeah, there's really a lot going on and I'm just grateful that my work gets to continue and it didn't have to end with this internship. But, yeah, and during it I just I got to plan all those meetings and really sit in on a lot of valuable things. They taught me a lot over this summer.

Shaquasia Barksdale: 9:33

Great, great. So you did kind of sort of answered the next question. I was going to ask you how your contributions impacted procurement as a whole and right now, as far as procurement, I can say, well, they brought you on and you're working on another project. So, yes, overall to contribute to the overall concept of procurement, especially public procurement. So that's very exciting to hear.

Liah Kilgore: 10:07

Yeah, I'm so excited. Yeah, sorry, I didn't have like a.

Shaquasia Barksdale: 10:10

There's no end to that statement because it's still ongoing, so Okay okay, so I will ask you were there any or current encounters as far as challenges with your Pacific internship or even the position that they gave you right now? And, if so, how did you overcome them?

Liah Kilgore: 10:33

Yeah, so a big challenge that we ran into quite often was just getting the access to certain systems. In the state there's a bunch of systems and a bunch of accesses that you need to have to do things, and it was. We were kind of just running around trying to get me access for a lot of the summer, which was a which was a barrier, but, um, thankfully now I have access to everything I need, so it's smooth sailing now. But yeah, at the time I'd be assigned a project and I couldn't get into this financial portal or I didn't have e-signature asset access. So just getting access was a big thing, but that was just more of a technical difficulty.

Kevin Minor: 11:15

Sure, but I mean, did you find that? How did you feel about that too? Because that that in and of itself is probably a learning process, right? Just the, just the amount of security and privacy. That goes into stuff like this.

Liah Kilgore: 11:28

Yeah, I mean I'm obviously grateful that they have so many security measures taken place. Makes all the work that we do really safe. I couldn't help but be annoyed Like oh gosh.

Kevin Minor: 11:40

I want to do this assignment.

Liah Kilgore: 11:43

And I can't because I don't have access. But yeah, I mean I will say that our help desk, they were fabulous. I called quite a few times and they always walked me through it. They remoted into my computer and physically did all the hard stuff for me to figure out my technical difficulties. But yeah, I mean as much as I did have problems issues not having access when I requested help, the help was readily available to me and it was. It was solved very quickly. It was just there were so many accesses that it happened so many times. But um, it's good that it did, because now now I have them all and I know, I know what I'm doing with them and why I need each thing.

Kevin Minor: 12:28

Right, right. Well, don't say that too soon. There'll be another one now, tomorrow.

Liah Kilgore: 12:38

Yeah, there probably will be.

Shaquasia Barksdale: 12:38

There's still a bunch of portals and Sigma that I could, I could use, I'm sure that is so great. So I will ask you this, Leah what would you alter or why, if you could, about either your internship process, your responsibilities or even your current role, now since they have extended you and hired you on? Is there anything particular that you will alter, and why?

Liah Kilgore: 13:07

One thing that I would alter. I don't really know if this would be possible, but let's say, in a perfect world I really enjoy the hybrid structure. I love going in the office to get face-to-face time, but I do work remotely, or I did this summer for a half day at home, and the difference between working in office and at home is kind of major, because our database is very, very slow at home when you're not in office, so that kind of slowed down my work. It would take 10 to 15 minutes sometimes to open up something at home versus in office. So I think that, though I enjoy being at home for that half day it's really nice I wish that we had quicker systems that were in place at home so my work could be just as fast and efficient. And I do think they are working on it. We're working on replacing the database right now, so that will happen. It's just unfortunately not yet.

Shaquasia Barksdale: 14:06

Gotcha, gotcha yeah.

Kevin Minor: 14:08

Well, that's a well, that's an interesting, that's an interesting something to alter. It sounds like you want to be in the office more often.

Liah Kilgore: 14:16

Yeah, which is something I mean. I'm, I'm Gen Z, I like being at home. I was a COVID kid, but um, I actually really valued the in-person time. I got almost more, which is crazy. I always thought that I'd want um to be to be at home working, but I I wouldn't have like built those relationships. My team was awesome. We got to. We got to do a lot, spend a lot of time together and kind of go on excursions during lunch breaks.

Liah Kilgore: 14:41

They walked me around the Capitol. I wouldn't have like built those relationships over teams and people talk over each other all the time when you're not face to face. You can, can't, you can't read body language. As much as the pain in the butt as it is to get up early and go in office, it's, it's worth it, I think right, yeah, and, and having that hands-on, you know real world experience, you know oh yeah, yeah, if I need help, I can.

Liah Kilgore: 15:07

I can bother someone, I can go up to them and ask a question. I don't have to schedule a meeting to talk to just have a quick conversation with anyone. I got to shadow people just when I was bored and had some free time. So, yeah, I learned a lot just by being in office.

Kevin Minor: 15:24

That's excellent, Leah. What's some advice you have for prospective students seeking an internship?

Liah Kilgore: 15:34

have for prospective students seeking an internship. I would advise prospective students to just go into this experience really open-minded. You're going to be given a list of duties that you have before you actually start and I'll just say that there are so many more things that you're going to learn than what's on that list. And always be curious, ask a bunch of questions. I had amazing bosses that always told me there are no stupid questions because I would. I would always apologize and say I'm sorry for asking again, but yeah, the more questions the better. Honestly, always be curious, try and try and ask people what they're up to and and just always go into it open-minded and willing to learn.

Kevin Minor: 16:12

What are your plans after you graduate? I know you said you just started your junior year, but you, are you looking forward? Are you going to stay with the state? What are you going to do? You're going to go abroad and never return. What's what's your, what's your thought.

Liah Kilgore: 16:21

Actually I am going abroad. I'm going abroad this spring semester, so I still have a lot more to do in college. I'm hoping to get an internship in the private sector for this coming summer because I want to see, uh, I want to kind of compare both before I, before I decide on one or the other. I'm only halfway through, so I'm not I'm not really sure what exact position I want, but I would definitely consider working for the state I I just had.

Liah Kilgore: 16:48

I have nothing but good things to say. I'm excited to keep this position, hopefully for the rest of college, and that I can make a decision about it. Um, but yeah, I, I really am interested in procurement as a whole and I really I really wasn't sure before this internship. It was just it was just supposed to be a learning experience for me in the supply chain field and I found that procurement is something that suits me a lot and I'm really excited for my classes that have procurement this semester, because I already know a lot of those things and get to learn more. So yeah, procurement is definitely the direction I'm heading, I think.

Kevin Minor: 17:26

Shukwaja. I think we're looking at a future NASPO member.

Liah Kilgore: 17:30

NASPO member. Yeah, that'd be awesome. I heard your conferences are super cool too.

Kevin Minor: 17:36

Oh my gosh.

Shaquasia Barksdale: 17:39

That's what they say. Thank you so much, Leah.

Kevin Minor: 17:42

Yeah, Leah, thank you so much.

Shaquasia Barksdale: 17:44

I'm so excited because I'm just like sometimes we have to wait here at NASPO to get any type of good news. If you know a state decided to hire an intern later on, after graduation and things like that For you to say something like that, I just got so happy inside.

Liah Kilgore: 18:01

Yeah, no, I'm so excited too. It's really a blessing. I'm so excited to get started on it.

Shaquasia Barksdale: 18:08

Yes, yes. So it is true for everybody out there, all the little people out there, it can be a possibility that you can potentially get higher sooner than later.

Kevin Minor: 18:19

Yeah, and then you can come to Nassau conferences, which, it's true, are also a lot of fun yeah, yeah, I know right. Well, thank you so much for, for taking the time to join us today, and good luck with your junior year and have fun going abroad.

Liah Kilgore: 18:36

Of course, thank you, thank you so much. I will.